Increase in the prices of essential commodities

179. SHRI RAMANAND YADAV: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been considerable increase in the prices of essential commodities in the country during the recent months; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor and what steps Government has taken or propose to take to bring down the prices of essential commodities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI AJIT PANJA): (a) There has been some increase in the prices of some essential commodities recently.

(b) The rise in the prices of some essential commodities is mainly attributed to the increase in support|procurement prices of various agricultural commodities for the producers|farmers|cultivators, increase in administered prices of a few commodities for the aforesaid cause, input costs, various developmental actions envisaged in the plan documents, particularly for tribal and rural areas.

The main thrust of the Government policy continues to be to increase the production of essential commodities, perticularly the commodities which are in short supply. The Public Distribution System is being streamlined and expanded. Some of the essential commodities are imported, if so required, to supplement the domestic supply. The export of some essential commodities is banned and|or regulated. Action is being taken by the State Governments against blackmarketeers and profiteers under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and the prevention of Blackmarketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essenital Commodities Act, 1980. The rural poor will continue to get supplies of rice and wheat at cheaper prices under various special programmes.

Prices of Sugar

180. SHRI VITHALBHAI MOTIRAM PATEL: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have allowed increase in the prices of sugar a number of times during the last two years;

(b) if so, how many times sugar prices have been increased and to what extent; and

(c) what are the reasons for increasing the sugar prices so often?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI AJIT PANJA): (a) to (c) As a result of increase in the statutory minimum price of sugarcane and escalations in cost of production of sugar, the all-India average ex-factory prices of levy sugar increased from Rs. 311.07 per quintal in 1983-84 to Rs. 346.75 per quintal in 1984-85 and Rs. 391.00 per quintal in 1985-86. Consequent upon these increases in ex-factory prices, the retail levy sugar prices were also increased on three occasions since the beginning of the calendar year 1984, as indicated below:

Date from which increase effective	Extent of increase in retail levy sugar price (Rs. per kg.)		
	From	To	Quantum of increase
1-2-1984	3.75	4.00	0.25
1-4-1985	4.00	4.40	0.40
1-12-1985	4.40	4.80	0.40